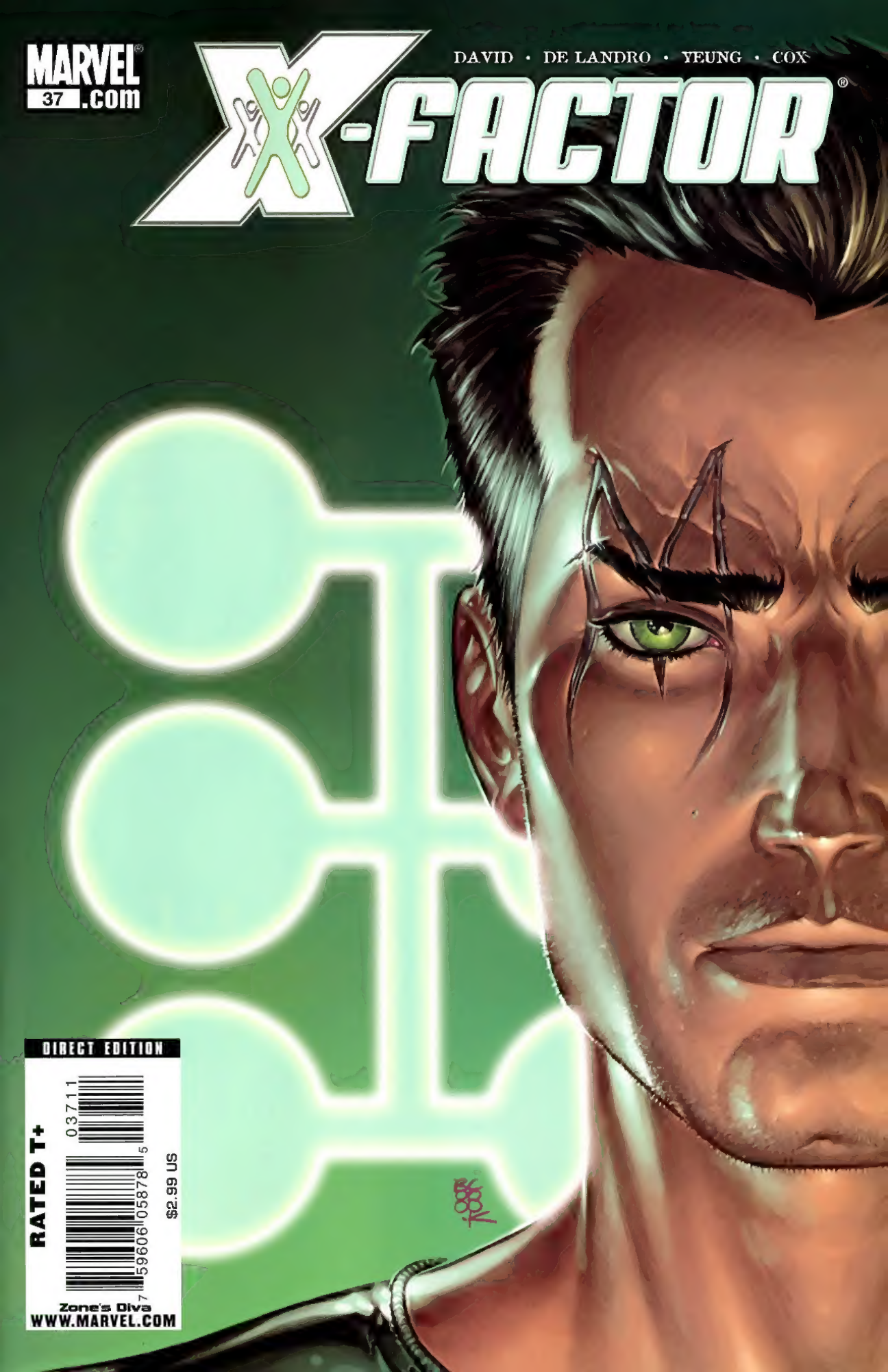
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In a society where mutants and former mutants alike feel threatened by the world around them, they turn to their first, best line of defense whenever trouble arises: X-Factor, the private detective agency founded by Madrox, the Multiple Man.

X-FACTOR

PREVIOUSLY...

Through the use of Longshot's precog powers, X-Factor has managed to trace the kidnapped Darwin to a local warehouse. Unfortunately within moments of their entering, Mr. Manu-the head of the Karma Project-had his henchmen blow the warehouse to kingdom come. Meanwhile Val Cooper has shown up at X-Factor headquarters to a less-than-welcome reception from Rictor and a profoundly pregnant Siryn.

On the homefront, my wife, Kathleen, saved up enough Disney Reward points-over two years' worth of buying Disney DVDs-to get me a free 5 DVD set of the entire first season of Disney's "Zorro" TV series. How cool is that? Do I have the greatest wife ever or what? Oh, and Caroline went around on Halloween as Spider-Girl. I'll try to have pictures next issue. And Ariel is now looking at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut as another possibility for college.

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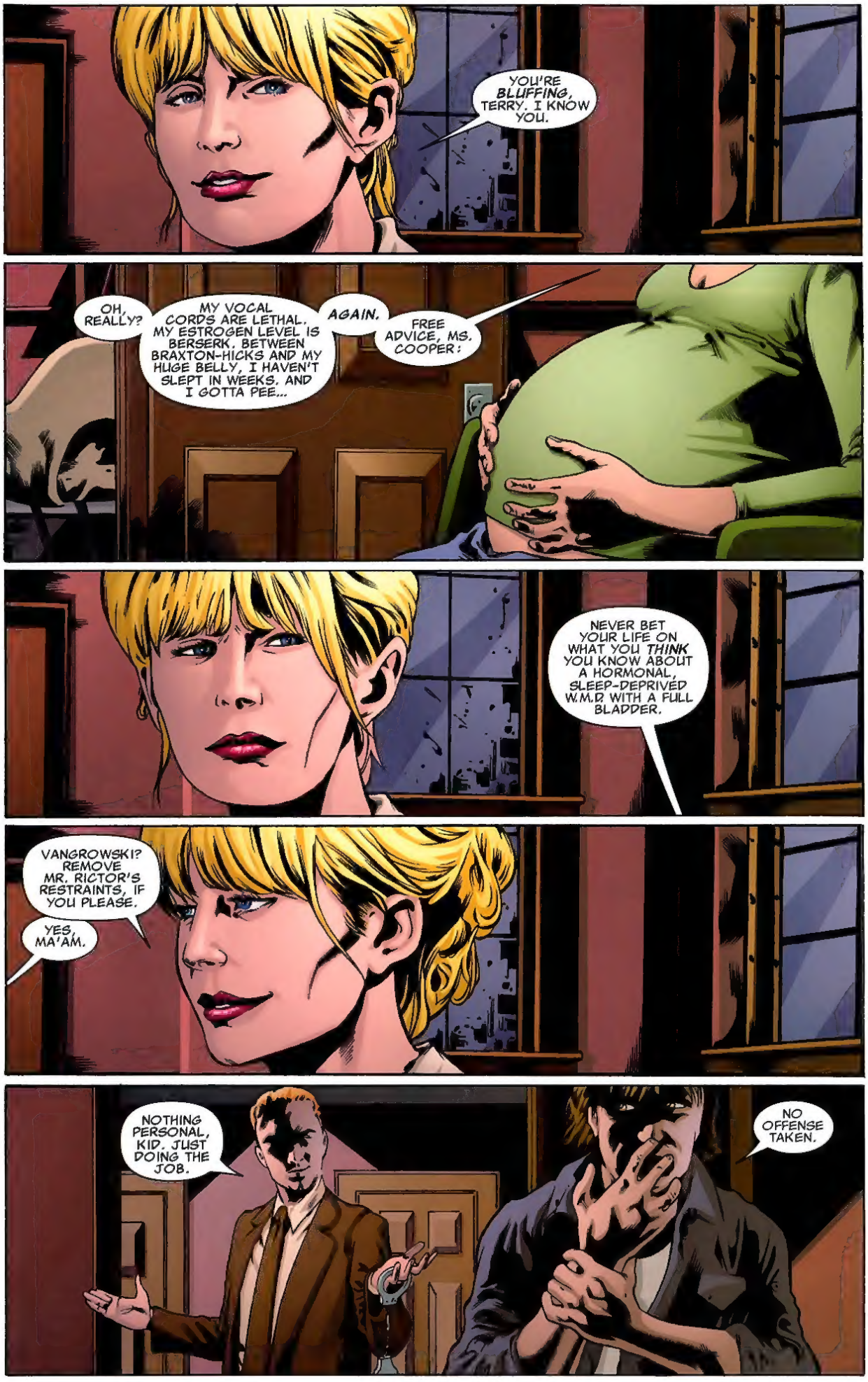
X-FACTOR HQ.
I'M NOT THE BAD GUY HERE, TERRY. AND BELIEVE ME...
...I KNOW IT'S EASY TO THINK OF ME THAT WAY.
BUT I'M ON YOUR SIDE.
MUTANTS... YOU'RE ALL A VALUABLE NATIONAL RESOURCE. I WANT TO HELP PROTECT YOU.
IS THAT A FACT.
AND CUFFING RICTOR FITS IN WITH THAT PHILOSOPHY HOW, EXACTLY?
I'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE MY MEN REMOVE THE CUFFS IF HE AGREED TO COOPERATE.
DEPENDS. DOES PROMISING TO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF THEM COUNT AS COOPERATING?
NOT SO MUCH.
UNCUFF HIM, MS. COOPER.
I'M AFRAID AT THE MOMENT I--
GOOD. YOU'RE WISE TO BE AFRAID.
EVER SEEN THE EFFECTS OF HIGH-POWERED SONICS CLOSE UP? PROPERLY AIMED, THEY CAN LIQUEFY THE HUMAN BRAIN WITHIN SECONDS.
AND MY AIM IS PRETTY GOOD.
STREAMS OF GRAY GOOK OOZING OUT YOUR EARS... YOUR NOSE...YOUR MOUTH...
IT'S A MESS.


YOU'RE BLUFFING, TERRY. I KNOW YOU.
OH, REALLY?
MY VOCAL CORDS ARE LETHAL. MY ESTROGEN LEVEL IS BERSERK. BETWEEN BRAXTON-HICKS AND MY HUGE BELLY, I HAVEN'T SLEPT IN WEEKS. AND I GOTTA PEE...
AGAIN.
FREE ADVICE, MS. COOPER:
NEVER BET YOUR LIFE ON WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT A HORMONAL, SLEEP-DEPRIVED W.M.D WITH A FULL BLADDER.
VANGROWSKI? REMOVE MR. RICTOR'S RESTRAINTS, IF YOU PLEASE.
YES, MA'AM.
NOTHING PERSONAL, KID. JUST DOING THE JOB.
NO OFFENSE TAKEN.

OOOOF!
AND THAT'S ME DOING MY JOB!
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S ENOUGH!
STAND DOWN.
BUT--
NOW.
YES, MA'AM.
THAT'S SLICK, VAL. CAN YOU MAKE HIM ROLL OVER? OR FETCH? BEGGING'S GOOD.
DON'T PUSH IT, KID OR--ORDERS OR NO--WE'RE GONNA DANCE.
ANYTIME, BRO'.
TERRY, WE'RE NOT ENEMIES. THE FACT IS, WE'VE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHY DON'T YOU ASK JAMIE, AS SOON AS HE GETS BACK?

"THEY'RE IN. REPEAT, THE MUTANTS ARE IN."
TAKE THEM.
I'M NOT LOVING THIS. THE WAREHOUSE IS EMPTY.
LIKE IT'S BEEN CLEANED OUT, YA MEAN.
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I--
KRAK
WHAT TH'HELL!?
THE FLOOR APPEARS TO HAVE COLLAPSED BENEATH YOUR FEET.
OH, Y'THINK? GEE, AND HERE I THOUGHT WE JUST FELL THROUGH A PLOT HOLE!

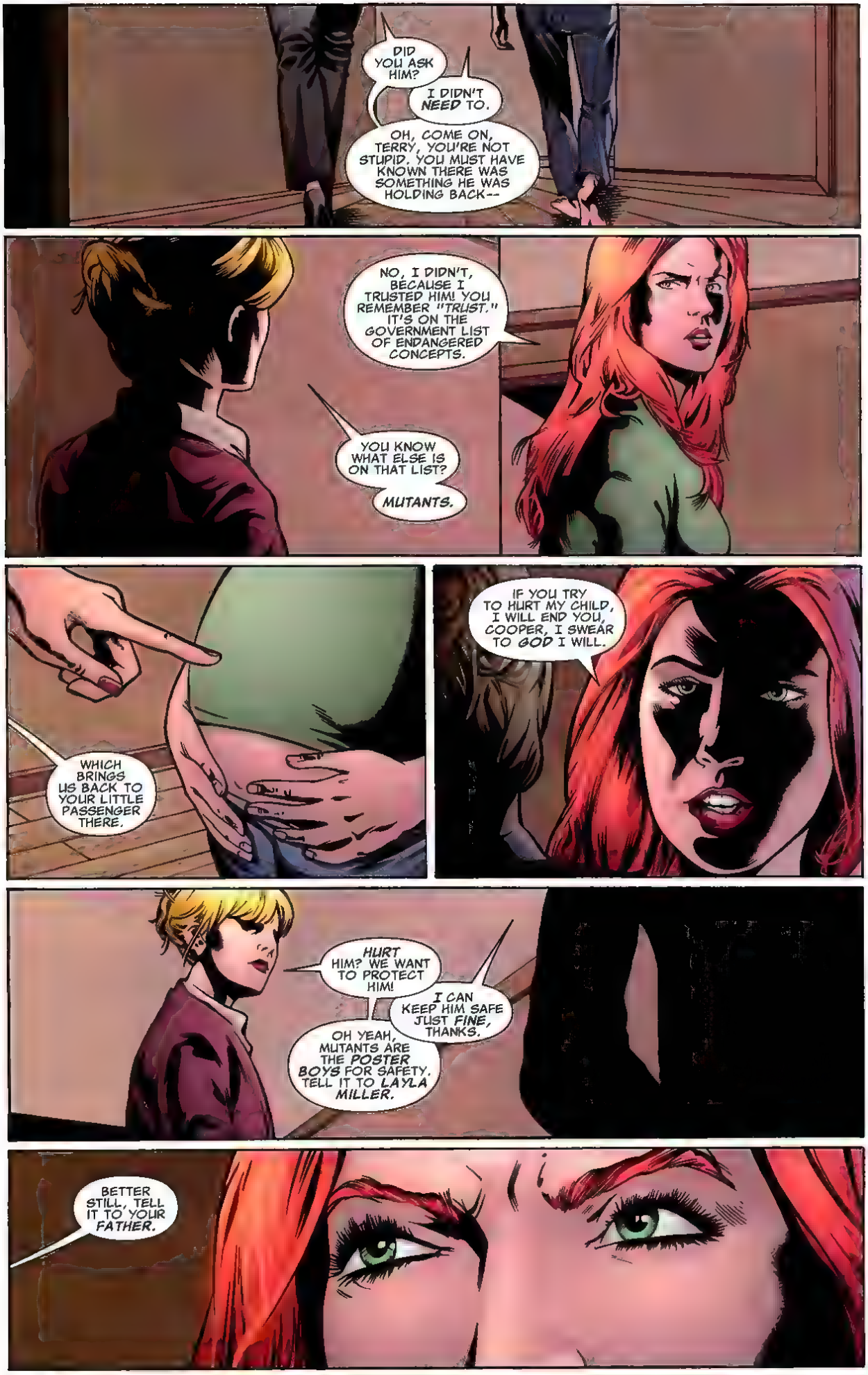
WINNING AND LOSING ARE FUNNY THINGS.
SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO TELL WHICH ONE YOU'RE DOING AT ANY GIVEN TIME.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT MARVELOUS LUCK POWER OF YOURS, LONGSHOT?
I...AM NOT SURE.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? I'D HATE TO THINK YOU *HURT* YOURSELF.
GET UP YOURSELF, MR. SMARTY MOUTH.
WHAT ABOUT ME?
I AM UNINJURED.
YOU THINK YOU'VE CAUGHT A BAD BREAK...
CAN YOU HELP US OUT OF HERE, MONET?
BE RIGHT DOW--
...AND THEN IT TURNS OUT THE BAD BREAK WAS A *LUCKY* ONE.

WHOA!
THEY'RE TAKEN, MR. MARU.
I DOUBT THE BLAST DISPOSED OF ALL OF THEM. WE HAVE TO ASSUME THEY'LL FIND THEIR WAY HERE...
...THIS WILL BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO TEST THE FRUITS OF OUR RESEARCH.
ARMANDO! COMPANY'S COMING.
WHAT DO YOU THINK? POT LUCK, OR DO WE PUT OUT THE FINE CHINA?
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU.
THAT DOESN'T SOUND VERY EVOLVED OF YOU.

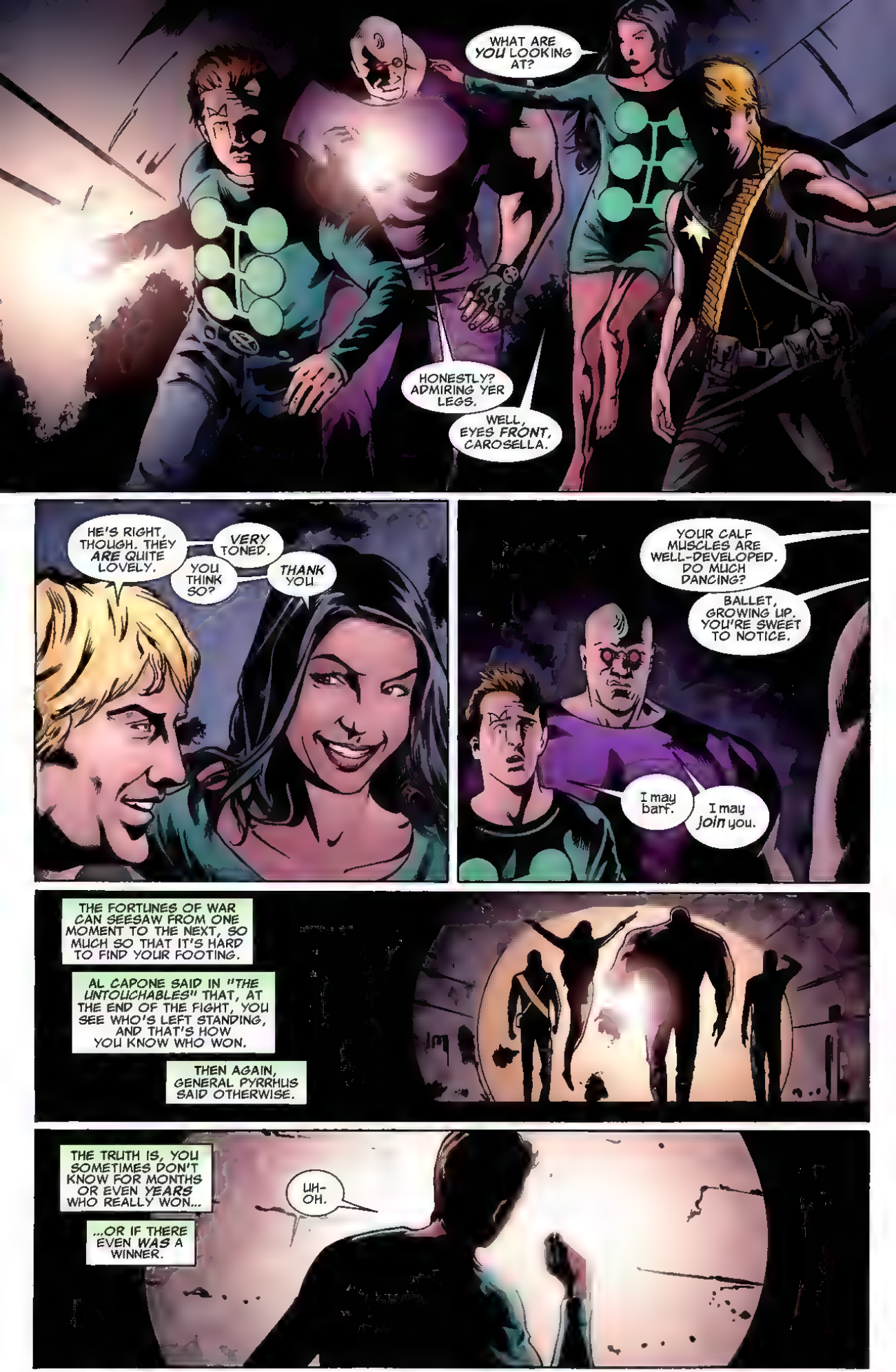
=KOFF= EVERYBODY OKAY?
GREAT, GREAT. AND T'THINK I PASSED ON TIGERS TICKETS FOR THIS.
APPARENTLY MY LUCK ABILITIES PAID OFF AFTER ALL.
THAT'S SOME POWER Y'GOT THERE. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, IF YER STILL SUCKIN' OXYGEN WHEN IT'S OVER, Y'GET T'SAY, "I MEANT T'DO THAT!"
YER LIKE THE PEE-WEE HERMAN OF THE SUPER HERO SET.
IS THAT GOOD?
MONET!
MONET!
CAN YOU HEAR ME?
ANSWER IF YOU CAN--!
WILL YOU SHUT UP!?
I'LL TELL YOU WHEN I NEED YOUR HELP!
I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.
MONET! MONET!
Fine, Mr. Large-and-in-charge...

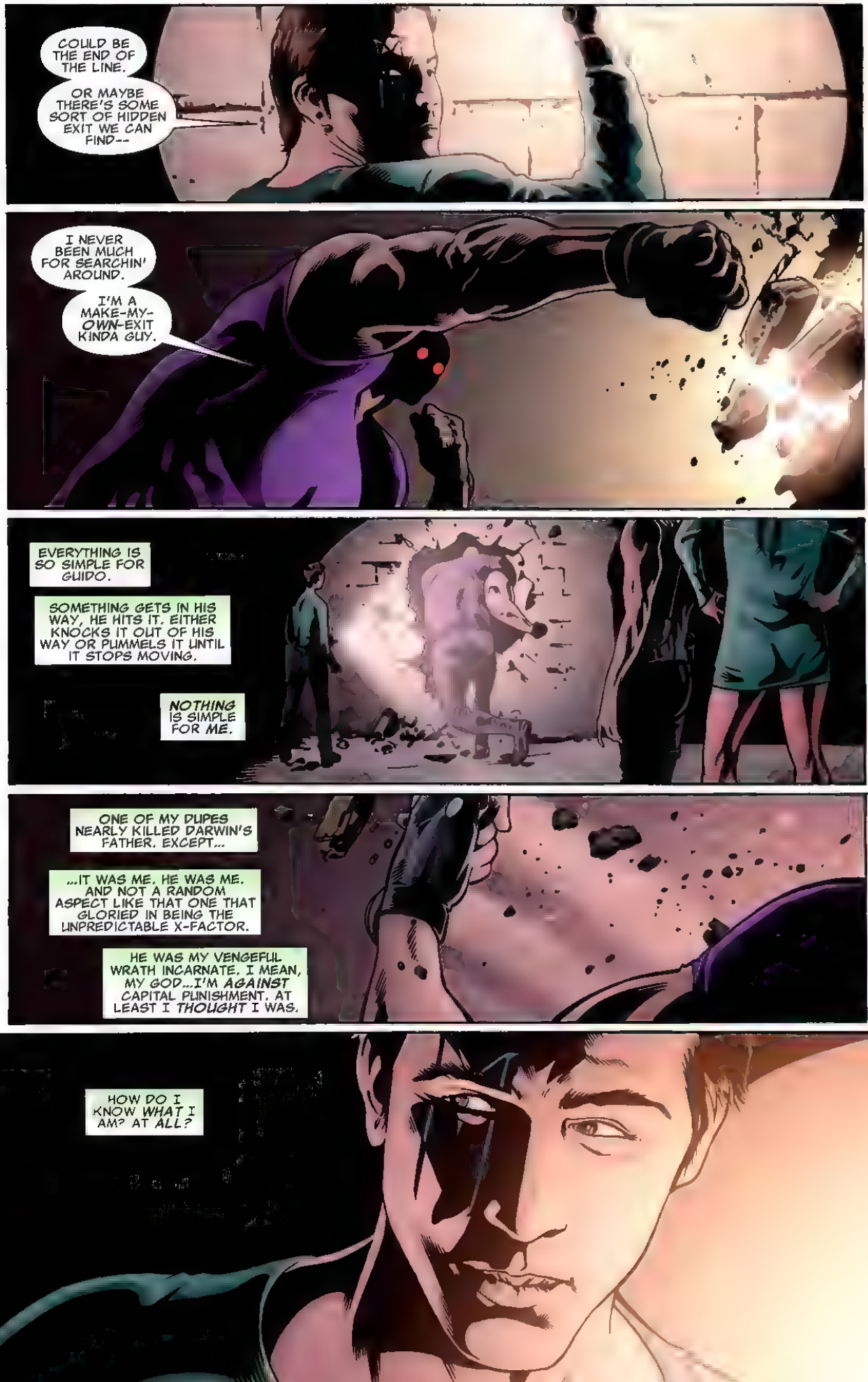
-KOFF-
-KOFF-
The first one who laughs, dies.
OOOO, WHO'S A DIRTY GIRL?
OKAY. IT'S NOW.
WHAT'S NOW?
I NEED YOUR HELP.
EXCELLENT. ANYTHING I CAN DO TO--
OH.
REALLY?
YEAH.
WONDERFUL.

THE QUESTION YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF, TERRY, IS WHAT KIND OF WORLD DO YOU WANT YOUR CHILD GROWING UP IN?
GEE, AND HERE I THOUGHT THE QUESTION I NEEDED TO ASK IS, WHY DO YOU PEOPLE KEEP *HARASSING* US?
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, WE'RE WORKING ON THE SAME SIDE.
I'LL GO WITH "OR NOT," THANKS.
TERRY... IT'S TIME YOU KNEW THAT MADROX HASN'T BEEN ENTIRELY CANDID WITH YOU.
THE FACT IS YOU *HAVE* BEEN WORKING WITH US FOR *MONTHS* NOW.
THE TANGRETTI CASE? THE MEERS CASE? OR THAT MOB INFORMANT CASE THREE WEEKS AGO?
OH, AND WE KICKED THE ANSELMO CASE YOUR WAY. NICE JOB SOLVING *THAT* ONE.
ALL OF IT WORK THAT SERVED GOVERNMENT INTERESTS. WELL-PAYING, TOO.
WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?
FLUUUSH
YOU'RE LYING.
JAMIE WOULDN'T KEEP THAT FROM ME.


DID YOU ASK HIM?
I DIDN'T NEED TO.
OH, COME ON, TERRY, YOU'RE NOT STUPID. YOU MUST HAVE KNOWN THERE WAS SOMETHING HE WAS HOLDING BACK--
NO, I DIDN'T, BECAUSE I TRUSTED HIM! YOU REMEMBER "TRUST," IT'S ON THE GOVERNMENT LIST OF ENDANGERED CONCEPTS.
YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE IS ON THAT LIST?
MUTANTS.
WHICH BRINGS US BACK TO YOUR LITTLE PASSENGER THERE.
IF YOU TRY TO HURT MY CHILD, I WILL END YOU, COOPER, I SWEAR TO GOD I WILL.
HURT HIM? WE WANT TO PROTECT HIM!
I CAN KEEP HIM SAFE JUST FINE, THANKS.
OH YEAH, MUTANTS ARE THE POSTER BOYS FOR SAFETY. TELL IT TO LAYLA MILLER.
BETTER STILL, TELL IT TO YOUR FATHER.

YOU DON'T GET TO MENTION HIM.
I'M JUST TRYING TO POINT OUT--
YOU DON'T GET TO MENTION HIM!
UNFFF!
LET HER GO! RIGHT NOW!
PUT THE GUN DOWN, MAN! LET ME TALK TO HER!
THERESA! BACK OFF!
TALKING'S DONE!
Killing me won't bring back your dad...
Fine. They'll be back. Too bad... I won't be alive... to see it...
HE'S NOT DEAD. HE'LL BE BACK. LAYLA, TOO. WE ALWAYS COME BACK.
÷GKHHHHH÷
THAT WOMAN HAS SOME SERIOUS ISSUES...
ISSUES? SHE HAS THE TRADE PAPERBACKS.


WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?
HONESTLY? ADMIRING YER LEGS.
WELL, EYES FRONT, CAROSELLA.
HE'S RIGHT, THOUGH. THEY ARE QUITE LOVELY.
VERY TONED.
YOU THINK SO?
THANK YOU
YOUR CALF MUSCLES ARE WELL-DEVELOPED. DO MUCH DANCING?
BALLET, GROWING UP. YOU'RE SWEET TO NOTICE.
I may barf.
I may join you.
THE FORTUNES OF WAR CAN SEESAW FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT, SO MUCH SO THAT IT'S HARD TO FIND YOUR FOOTING.
AL CAPONE SAID IN "THE UNTOUCHABLES" THAT, AT THE END OF THE FIGHT, YOU SEE WHO'S LEFT STANDING, AND THAT'S HOW YOU KNOW WHO WON.
THEN AGAIN, GENERAL PYRRHUS SAID OTHERWISE.
THE TRUTH IS, YOU SOMETIMES DON'T KNOW FOR MONTHS OR EVEN YEARS WHO REALLY WON...
...OR IF THERE EVEN WAS A WINNER.
UH-OH.


COULD BE THE END OF THE LINE.
OR MAYBE THERE'S SOME SORT OF HIDDEN EXIT WE CAN FIND--
I NEVER BEEN MUCH FOR SEARCHIN' AROUND.
I'M A MAKE-MY-OWN-EXIT KINDA GUY.
EVERYTHING IS SO SIMPLE FOR GUIDO.
SOMETHING GETS IN HIS WAY, HE HITS IT. EITHER KNOCKS IT OUT OF HIS WAY OR PUMMELS IT UNTIL IT STOPS MOVING.
NOTHING IS SIMPLE FOR ME.
ONE OF MY DUPES NEARLY KILLED DARWIN'S FATHER. EXCEPT...
...IT WAS ME. HE WAS ME. AND NOT A RANDOM ASPECT LIKE THAT ONE THAT GLORIED IN BEING THE UNPREDICTABLE X-FACTOR.
HE WAS MY VENGEFUL WRATH INCARNATE. I MEAN, MY GOD...I'M AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I WAS.
HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I AM? AT ALL?

WE'RE THROUGH!
YES, YOU ARE.
TOTALLY.

YAAAAHH!!
THEN AGAIN...
...THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO TROUBLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF KILLING.
AT ALL.
FALL BACK!!!!
BY ALL MEANS, FALL BACK.
FALL FORWARD.
BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA
AS LONG AS YOU FALL...
...I DON'T REALLY GIVE A DAMN WHICH DIRECTION YOU GO.

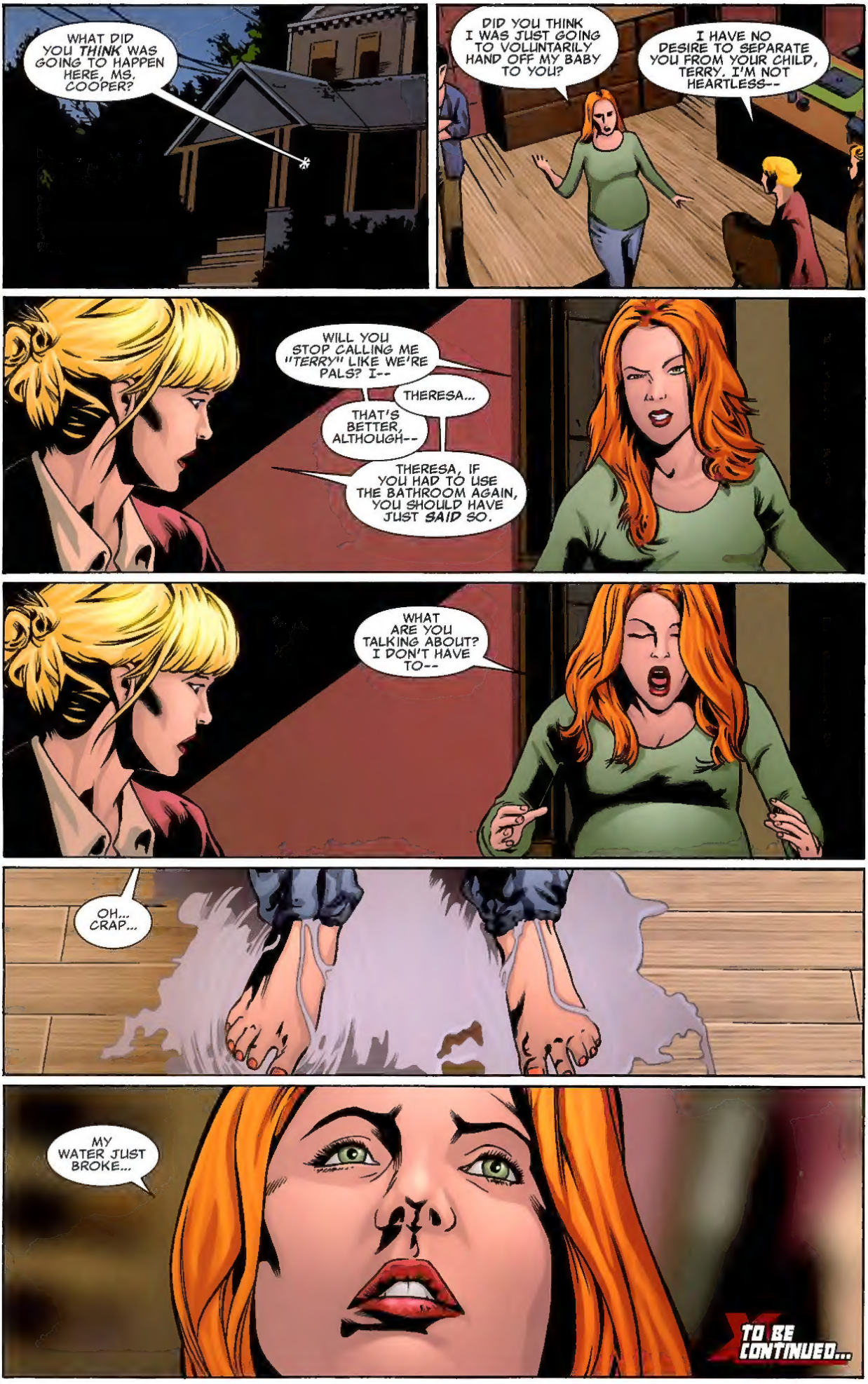
THE PROBLEM WITH BATTLE SITUATIONS...
...IS THAT EVERYTHING COMES IN SUCH QUICK WAVES THAT IT'S HARD TO KEEP TRACK OF EVERYTHING...
...MUCH LESS GET A BEAD ON HOW YOU'RE DOING
ORRRHHH!
TAKE GUIDO, FOR INSTANCE.
THEY PROBABLY THINK THEY'VE HURT HIM. IN A WAY, THEY HAVE...
...BECAUSE WHEN HE ABSORBS ENOUGH KINETIC ENERGY, HE'S IN AGONY UNTIL HE RELEASES IT.
AND IF HE DOESN'T DO IT SOON ENOUGH, BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO HIM.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF HE DOES DO IT FAST ENOUGH...
...BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO OTHER PEOPLE.
WHERE'S YOUR PRISONER? WHERE'S DARWIN?
GO TO HELL!
WUMF
SEE WHAT I JUST DID? MADE ANOTHER ME.
NOW--
--IF I DO THAT AGAIN WHILE MY HAND IS INSIDE YOU, IT WON'T BE PRETTY.
SO TALK BEFORE--
UNFFF--
NO!!!
SMAK

PUNK
OH, YUCK.
WELL, THAT WAS EXCITING.
A little help...?
OH MY GOD... I'M OUT OF CONTROL...
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO?!?
SAVED YOUR LIFE, YOU IDIOT.
HE'D PULLED OUT A KNIFE FROM HIS BELT. WHILE YOU WERE TRYING TO THREATEN HIM INTO SPILLING HIS GUTS, HE WAS ABOUT TO SPILL YOURS.
SEE. SEE THERE?
NOW KEEP YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME.
THIS ISN'T A GAME.
YEAH, IT IS. EXCEPT IT'S NOT ABOUT WINNING OR LOSING. IT'S ABOUT BEATING THE GAME ITSELF. DO THAT, AND NOTHING ELSE MATTERS.

SHUT UP.
SURE, YOU CAN SHUT ME UP OUT *HERE*, BUT--
--NOT INSIDE YOUR HEAD.
JAMIE... WHAT ABOUT *THAT* ONE?
YEAH...WHAT ABOUT ME? I... *REALLY* WOULDN'T MIND GOING AWAY...
...
LATER.
BUT--
I SAID *LATER!* MONET, GRAB A GUARD AND PROBE HIS MIND. FIND OUT WHERE DARWIN IS.
RIP IT OUT OF HIS CEREBRAL CORTEX IF YOU HAVE TO, BUT--
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
YOU WANT DARWIN?

TAKE YOUR PICK.


WHAT DID YOU THINK WAS GOING TO HAPPEN HERE, MS. COOPER?
DID YOU THINK I WAS JUST GOING TO VOLUNTARILY HAND OFF MY BABY TO YOU?
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO SEPARATE YOU FROM YOUR CHILD, TERRY. I'M NOT HEARTLESS--
WILL YOU STOP CALLING ME "TERRY" LIKE WE'RE PALS? I--
THERESA...
THAT'S BETTER, ALTHOUGH--
THERESA, IF YOU HAD TO USE THE BATHROOM AGAIN, YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST SAID SO.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I DON'T HAVE TO--
OH... CRAP...
MY WATER JUST BROKE...
TO BE CONTINUED...

Megan

Minutemen

Scans by Zone